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I am a demographer specialising in inter-disciplinary research on a variety of health and development issues. My areas of focus include young people's education, economic participation, agency and aspirations, sexual and reproductive health and mental health, gender equality and gender-based violence and modern-day slavery. I have over two decades of experience in leading rigorous quantitative and qualitative research studies and have served as the principal investigator/ co-investigator of over 30 formative, implementation and evaluation research studies, including large, complex national level studies in India. I have extensive experience in designing, guiding implementation and evaluating gender-transformative programmes to prevent violence against women and girls as well as social and behavioural change interventions to advance adolescent girls' education, school-to-work transitions and agency and to improve sexual and reproductive health of adolescents. I also come with experience in leading capacity-building and technical assistance initiatives. Currently, I am working as an independent researcher and a freelance consultant. Previously, I held various positions at the Population Council during 2000-2022, rising from post-doctoral fellow to programme officer, senior programme officer to Associate and then Senior Associate. I have worked extensively with multiple stakeholders from the government, NGO and private sectors. I had served as a member of scientific panels of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population and the Executive Council of the Asian Population Association. I obtained PhD in Population Studies from Flinders University of South Australia.

Professional experiences

2023 - Independent researcher and consultant

2016-2022 Senior Associate, Population Council

Provided programmatic and research leadership as well as managerial leadership to the Poverty, Gender and Youth division in the India office of the Population Council. Led 17 small, medium and large-scale formative, implementation and evaluation research projects in this role. These projects focused on a variety of themes related to adolescent health and development (education, economic participation, agency and aspirations, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and citizenship), gender (gender-transformative programmes and interventions to reduce gender-based violence), modern-day slavery (child labour, child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation of women, labour exploitations in internal and international migration networks) and maternal, newborn and child health. A seminal study was the first-ever longitudinal study of state-representative samples of 10-19-year-olds in two large states of India that explored multiple facets of adolescent lives, including their future aspirations.

Led monitoring and evaluation initiatives to assess the feasibility, acceptance, relevance and impact of programmes implemented by government bodies, non-governmental organizations and industries in India to reduce child marriage, strengthen the delivery of vocational education to inschool and out-of-school adolescent girls, deliver comprehensive sexuality education to adolescent girls and boys, reduce violence against women and girls and promote labour force participation among young and adult women. Led evidence syntheses on what works to inform investment decisions by major donors to reduce child marriage and teenage pregnancy and to promote female labour force participation among young women in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions. Served as a resource person for capacity- building initiatives and provided technical assistance to government departments in India for strengthening data systems and collection to monitor and evaluate progress of programmes. Some examples include designing and leading a mentorship programme to support a new generation of young researchers from academic institutions and non-

governmental organisations to undertake research on maternal, newborn and child health issues to inform policies and programmes in India and serving as a resource person for an adolescent health research fellowship programme to promote socio-behavioural, health and policy research in priority areas that impact adolescents in India.

Was also responsible for preparing proposals and raising funds for the Council, planning, monitoring and overseeing the use of grants and contracts, and maintaining key donor relationships, including donor submission processes and responding to donor requests. Represented the Population Council to government, international agencies, donors and partner organizations and contributed to advancing national agenda on adolescent health and development and gender and served on Technical Resource Groups of Government of India and executive council of professional bodies such as the Asian Population Association.

2009-2015 Associate, Population Council

Played leadership role in designing, implementing and/ or evaluating programs directed at promoting girls' secondary education and improving their learning outcomes, empowering girls and reducing violence against women and girls. Some examples of my work include: (1) co-designing a randomized controlled trial to assess the acceptability and feasibility of engaging parents and communities to promote girls' secondary education and measure its effectiveness in improving girls' transition to secondary education, school attendance and learning outcomes; (2) evaluating safe space programmes for school-going and out-of-school adolescent girls in multiple states in India; (3) a mixed-method study on gender differences in schooling experiences, including teacher attitudes about the capabilities of boys and girls and differential classroom dynamics, and the association between quality of schooling and schooling outcomes among boys and girls; and (4) co-designing a state-of-the-art, comprehensive package of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention interventions to reduce violence against women and girls, grounded in ecological framework, assessing the usefulness of the treatments for different population sub-groups most affected by violence and measuring the scalability and cost-effectiveness of different treatments.

Also led research studies to advance evidence on the ways in which gender and power imbalances intersect to compromise young peoples' ability to exercise informed choices and realize their rights in India. Conducted impact evaluation of a government-sponsored conditional cash transfer programme intended to make pregnancy safe for women and assessed the performance of adolescent friendly health clinics in several states in India and interventions intended to make the health system more responsive to the pregnancy and contraceptive needs of married adolescents. Served as an integral member of the team that conducted a population needs assessment, commissioned by UNFPA India and insights from the study was used to design UNFPA India's eighth five-year country programme of assistance to India. Collaborated with private sectors, NGOs and multiple government departments in all these works and provided technical guidance to them to enhance their program strategy, delivery and measurement. Also served as a mentor to the Population Council's Fred H Bixby Fellowship Program for post-doctoral fellows.

Played an important role in raising funds for various projects from donors such as FCDO, the MacArthur Foundation, the Elton John AIDS Foundation, the Human Dignity Foundation, the Barr Foundation, the Nike Foundation and the NoVo Foundation as well as preparing and submitting project reports to donors and other partners. Organised several meetings, seminars and conferences and served as a member of the Asian Population Association's executive council and the scientific panel of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population.

2004–2008 Senior Programme Officer, Population Council

Led multiple research projects on adolescents and youth, including India's first-ever sub-nationally representative study of the situation and needs of adolescents and youth that collected data from 50,000 plus youth aged 15-24 and provided important baseline indicators on every major

dimension of youth life – education, work, family life, sexual activity, marriage, health and civic participation – against which the long-term impact of programmes can be measured in India.

Served as co-principal investigator of two of the Council's capacity-building initiatives: the Health and Population Innovation Fellowship Program that aimed to encourage the development of innovative approaches and research initiatives focused on addressing sexual and reproductive health needs and a small grant research program to build evidence on sexual and reproductive health in two of the most backward states in India. Was also an integral member of the Population Council team that made significant input into the design of programming for adolescents and youth in India's Reproductive and Child Health Program-II and served as a member of the Scientific Panel of the International Union for Scientific Study of Population. Participated in many international workshops and conferences as a resource person or presenter.

2000-2004 Project Director, Population Council

Led a multi-partner collaborative intervention project to develop and test an integrated package of health and social interventions to improve married young women's reproductive and sexual health knowledge and practices, enhance their agency and expand their social support networks ("The First-time Parents Project"). Also led syntheses of available evidence and used these syntheses as tools to inform policies and programmes in sexual and reproductive health field in India. Contributed to a social assessment of India's Reproductive and Child Health Program and supported the work of the Adolescent Working Group, a network hosted by the Population Council, of non-governmental organisations focused on adolescent and youth issues in India.

2000 Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Population Council

Conducted a review of published and grey literature on sexually transmitted diseases scenario and prevention strategies in India and synthesized the evidence. Designed and conducted a study on health needs of women in the post-reproductive ages in India and on the acceptability of screening programmes among them.

Other professional experiences

- Session organiser, Maternal and pregnancy related outcomes and care, International Population Conference organised by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (2025)
- External examiner for examining Ph. D thesis, International Institute for Population Sciences
- Theme convenor, Children and Youth, International Population Conference organised by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (2021)
- Member, Asian Population Association Executive Council (2013-2018)
- Chair, Asian Population Association Council Committee on Scientific Groups (2013-2018)
- Member, IUSSP's Nominations Committee for the IUSSP Council election in 2017
- Member, IUSSP Scientific Panel on Reproductive Health (2011 2014)
- Theme convenor, Children and Adolescents, International Population Conference organised by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (Busan, 2013)
- Theme leader, Adolescent Life Course in Asian Countries, Asian Population Association Conference (Bangkok, 2012)
- Member, IUSSP Scientific Panel on HIV/AIDS and Sexual Behaviour (2006-2011)
- Theme leader, Adolescent Life Course in Asian Countries, Asian Population Association Conference (New Delhi, 2010)
- Member, Editorial Advisory Board, Culture Health and Sexuality
- Peer reviewer for international journals

Education

- 2000 **PhD (Population Studies),** Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia; pursued a research project, using quantitative & qualitative data, that expanded the evidence on the role of gender inequalities, women's lack of autonomy & societal beliefs in shaping women's sexual and reproductive health in India.
- 1993 **MPhil (Population Studies)**, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India; undertook a study on linkages between household economies, women's decision-making autonomy and their reproductive intentions & behaviours in India.
- 1992 Masters (Population Studies), International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India
- 1990 Masters (Economics), University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, India

Languages

Fluent in English and Malayalam (oral and written), basic in Hindi and Tamil

Publications

Peer-reviewed journal articles

- KG Santhya and AJ Francis Zavier. 2022. Long-term impact of exposure to a gender-transformative program among young men: Findings from a longitudinal study in Bihar, India, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 70(4):634-642
- SK Patel, **KG Santhya** and N Haberland. 2021. What shapes gender attitudes among adolescent girls and boys? Evidence from the UDAYA longitudinal study in India, *PLOS ONE*, 16(3): e0248766
- J Pinchoff, **KG Santhya**, C White et al. 2020. Gender specific differences in COVID-19 knowledge, behavior and health effects among adolescents and young adults in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, India, *PLOS ONE*, 15(12): e0244053
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- IH Shah, **KG Santhya** and J Cleland. 2015. Postpartum and post-abortion contraception: From research to programs, *Studies in Family Planning*, 46(4): 343-53
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- SJ Jejeebhoy, **KG Santhya** and AJ Francis Zavier. 2014. Demand for contraception to delay the first pregnancy among young women in India, *Studies in Family Planning*, 45(2): 183-201
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- **KG Santhya** and AJ Francis Zavier. 2013. Non-consensual sex within pre-marital relationships: Experiences of young women in India, *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 16(1): 30-46
- AJ Francis Zavier and **KG Santhya.** 2013. How conditional cash transfers to promote institutional delivery can also influence postpartum contraception: Evidence from Rajasthan, India, *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, 123 (supplement 1): e43-e46
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- S Sabarwal, **KG Santhya** and SJ Jejeebhoy. 2013. Determinants of marital violence: findings from a prospective study of rural women in India, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol xlvlil no. 16
- SJ Jejeebhoy, AJ Francis Zavier and **KG Santhya**. 2013. Meeting the commitments of the ICPD Programme of Action to young people, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 21(41):18–30
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- SJ Jejeebhoy, **KG Santhya,** R Acharya et al. 2012. Marriage-related decision-making and young women's marital relations and agency, *Asian Population Studies*, 9(1): 28-49
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- **KG Santhya**, R Acharya and SJ Jejeebhoy. 2011. Condom use before marriage and its correlates: Evidence from India, *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 37(4):170-80
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- **KG Santhya,** R Acharya, SJ Jejeebhoy et al. 2011. Timing of first sex before marriage and its correlates: Evidence from India, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 13 (3): 327-41
- **KG Santhya,** U Ram, R Acharya et al. 2010. Associations between early marriage and young women's marital and reproductive health outcomes: Evidence from India, *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 36(3):132-39
- R Acharya, A Singh, **KG Santhya** et al. 2010. Participation in civil society and political life among young people in Maharashtra: Findings from the Youth in India –Situation and Needs Study, *Journal of Adolescence*, 33: 553-61
- KG Santhya and SJ Jejeebhoy. 2007. Early marriage and HIV/AIDS: Risk factors among young women, Economic and Political Weekly, XLII (14): 1291-1297

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- **KG Santhya** and SJ Jejeebhoy. 2014. Setting the stage, in SJ Jejeebhoy et al. (eds.), *Health and Population in India: An Assessment of the Current Situation and Future Needs*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press
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- SJ Jejeebhoy, **KG Santhya,** PM Kulkarni et al. 2014. Moving forward, in SJ Jejeebhoy et al. (eds.), Health and Population in India: An Assessment of the Current Situation and Future Needs, New Delhi: Oxford University Press
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- **KG Santhya** and SJ Jejeebhoy. 2006, Young women's experience of forced sex within marriage: Evidence from India, in SJ Jejeebhoy et al. (eds.), Sex without Consent: Young People in Developing Countries, London: Zed Books
- SJ Jejeebhoy, **KG Santhya**, RK Verma et al. 2004, Setting the stage, in SJ Jejeebhoy (ed.), *Looking Back, Looking Forward: A Profile of Sexual and Reproductive Health in India*, New Delhi: Rawat Publications

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- **KG Santhya,** V Groppo et al. 2024. *Child Labour and Schooling in India: A Reappraisal,* Florence: UNICEF Innocenti
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- KG Santhya, AJ Francis Zavier, S Rampal et al. 2022. Promoting Safe Overseas Labour Migration: Lessons from ASK's Safe Migration Project in India, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council.
- S Ainul, E Haque, **KG Santhya** et al. 2022. Assessment of Overseas Labor Migration Systems in Bangladesh, Technical report. Dhaka: Population Council.
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- **KG Santhya**, AJ Francis Zavier, S Banerjee et al. 2022. *Ethical Recruitment and Employment in the Construction Industry in India: Perspectives and Experiences of Workers and Microcontractors*, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council.
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- S Mehra, RK Singh, V Nair, **KG Santhya** et al. 2016. Addressing Adolescent Girls' Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS: Lessons from the Meri Life Meri Choice Project, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council
- **KG Santhya**, R Prakash, SJ Jejeebhoy et al. 2014. Accessing Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics in India: The Perspectives of Adolescents and Youth. Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council.
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- KG Santhya, N Haberland, A Das et al. 2008. Empowering Married Young Women and Improving Their Sexual and Reproductive Health: Effects of the First-time Parents Project, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council
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- KG Santhya, SJ Jejeebhoy, S Ghosh et al. 2007. Addressing the Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs of Young People: Perspectives and Experiences of Stakeholders from the Health and Non-health Sectors, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council
- **KG Santhya** and SJ Jejeebhoy, 2007, Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in India: Policies, Programmes and Realities, Population Council Regional working Papers No. 19, New Delhi
- KG Santhya, N Haberland and AK Singh. 2006, 'She knew only when the garland was put around her neck': Findings from an Exploratory Study on Early Marriage in Rajasthan, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council
- F Ram, RK Sinha, SK Mohanty, A Lakhani, A Das, N Haberland and **KG Santhya.** 2006. *Marriage* and *Motherhood: An Exploratory Study of the Social and Reproductive Health Status of Married Young Women in Gujarat and West Bengal, India*, Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council
- Grants and contracts with principal investigator/co-investigator role at the Population Council (selected)
- Global Fund to End Modern Slavery; principal investigator

 To expand evidence base to inform strategies to reduce the prevalence of modern-day slavery in India and Bangladesh, with a special focus on overseas labour recruitment, commercial sexual exploitation of women and children and labour exploitations in

construction industry and assess effectiveness of interventions to reduce vulnerabilities, address structural drivers and assist survivors of commercial sexual exploitation and labour exploitations towards rehabilitation and reintegration.

Gates Foundation and Packard Foundation; principal investigator

To conduct the first-ever longitudinal study of state-representative samples of adolescents to identify factors that can help them make a healthy, safe and successful transition from adolescence to young adulthood in India.

UNICEF Innocenti; principal investigator

To generate evidence on the prevalence of child labour in India, its drivers and effective strategies to eliminate child labour and to promote research and knowledge uptake by policy makers, researchers and the general public.

Children's Investment Fund Foundation; principal investigator

To conduct an evaluation of a multi-component, social and behavioural change intervention to reduce the incidence of unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and intimate partner violence among adolescents in India and assess whether and how the intervention contributed to strengthening adolescent sexual and reproductive health policy, programming and outcomes in India.

Children's Investment Fund Foundation; principal investigator

To conduct an evaluation of a human-centred intervention to improve adolescent sexual health and education outcomes in India, including assessment of programme performance against the theory of change, process and outcome evaluations and cost-effectiveness.

John D and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation; principal investigator

To deepen the knowledge base on the maternal and newborn health situation in India and support a new generation of researchers to undertake related research.

International Growth Centre; principal investigator

To generate evidence on long-term effects of adolescent boys' exposure to a gender transformative intervention on their gender role attitudes and perpetration of intimate partner violence in India.

American Jewish World Service; principal investigator

To build the evidence base on the determinants, mediators and consequences of child marriage and advance learning about measuring agency, voice and related concepts.

American Jewish World Service; principal investigator

To identify what works to reduce child marriage in India.

UKaid; deputy team leader

To develop and evaluate a state-of-the-art intervention package, comprising primary, secondary and tertiary prevention models for reducing violence against women in India, using experimental, quasi-experimental and non-experimental designs, costing study and scalability assessment.

MacArthur Foundation and Barr Foundation; co-investigator

To evaluate the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of a health-system strengthening intervention to address the needs of married young women for contraceptive and pregnancy planning, using quasi-experimental design.

Elton John AIDS Foundation; principal investigator

To evaluate a social and behavioural change intervention to reduce adolescent girls' vulnerability to HIV, using quasi-experimental design and mixed methods.

MacArthur Foundation, Human Dignity Foundation; principal investigator

To design and evaluate a randomized controlled trial in rural India to support adolescent girls' transition to and retention in secondary education and improve girls' learning outcomes by building parental and community engagement in and accountability for

secondary education.

MacArthur Foundation; 2011-2014; co-investigator

To assess the Government of India's Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH) strategy, with a special focus on better understanding the constraints faced by health care providers in effectively imparting ARSH services and identifying approaches to enable them to overcome these constraints and to bring evidence and critical analyses to policy and programme discussions to advance the ARSH agenda in India.

Novo Foundation, Nike Foundation and Gates Foundation; 2012-2013; co-investigator
To undertake a rigorous landscaping study of trafficking and commercial sexual
exploitation of adolescent girls aged 12-19 in India to identify the direct and indirect factors
that lead to the commercial sexual exploitation of girls, the factors protecting them from
such risks, and the business model that encourages the commercial sexual exploitation of

girls.

Ford Foundation; 2010-2013; co-investigator

To undertake a multi-component study on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues in India, including a review of laws, policies and programmes, a study of parental level factors influencing young people's agency and transitions to sexual life, marriage and parenthood and developing and pilot-testing an intervention model to engage parents in enabling young people to exhibit agency and exercise informed, wanted and safe choices in sexual and reproductive matters.

Academic honours and fellowships

- Australian Development Cooperation Scholarship awarded by AusAID for pursuing PhD in Population Studies at Flinders University, Adelaide (1995-99)
- Junior Research Fellowship awarded by University Grants Commission, Government of India for pursuing PhD in Population Studies at International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai (1993-94)
- Government of India Fellowship for pursuing M.Phil in Population Studies at International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai (1992-93)
- Gold Medal awarded by International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai for securing First Rank in MA in Population Studies (1992)
- Government of India Fellowship for pursuing MA in Population Studies at International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai (1991-92)
- Government of India Merit Scholarship pursuing MA in Economics at Kerala University, Trivandrum (1988-90)
- Gold Medal awarded by Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala for securing First Rank in BA in Economics (1988)